

THE FATAL PRESCRIPTION

By Olivia Meredith

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"Tired," yawned Boyd Leslie, prescription clerk for Davis & Co. "I'm dead for the want of sleep. The end of a long day. Oh, my!"

There was a tinge of relief in his first words, for a respite, relief seemed in view. He had put out most of the lights, he had just locked the street door, when the knob was turned and a small boy breathless and perspiring, shouted lustily:

"I must get in, doctor says I must hurry," and he waved a fragment of paper which Boyd recognized as a prescription. He let the boy in. Midnight weariness made him sway, the lights were poor, he almost nodded putting up the prescription. It was "For Mr. Lewis," a heart tonic, Boyd noted that. He was so done out, that as he gave the waiting boy the bottle he left the last phial he had used in filling the prescription upon the case counter. Then, without even undressing, he flung himself on the lounge just behind the case and was plunged in sudden slumber immediately.

Long hours, irregular meals, lack of air and exercise were fast undermining a splendid constitution. There was no nine-hour rule at the Davis establishment. The company owned similar branch establishments in twenty Minnesota towns and the prescription clerk was manager, porter, soda fountain tender and a very miscellaneous general utility man.

"U-um! Just about half slept out," yawned Boyd at daylight, rousing up at the call of an alarm clock, unrefreshed for another day of hard work. "Well, if I can stand it out I'll soon have enough to start a course at the medical college."

Boyd cooked his sparse breakfast on a spirit stove. He tidied up and ventilated the store and set at putting the disorderly prescription desk in order. As he picked up a phial ly-

ing upon it he raised it slowly. A shudder passed over his frame. He turned deadly white. He uttered a great gasp. His horror-stricken eyes were glued to the label on the bottle.

"The last I used last night in making up that prescription," he spoke breathlessly, "and—poison!"

How had he come to make the fatal error? His dazed, tired eyes had read "ascetina" for "arsenic." He had unwittingly substituted for a harmless alternate enough of the deadliest



He Turned Deadly White.

poison known to materia medica to kill a dozen men.

Sick at heart, Boyd Leslie dropped the fatal phial and sank to a chair, overcome. The deed was done, without any doubt! Oh, was there the merest vestige of a hope that the prescription had not been used? Shaking from head to foot with anxiety and dread the young drug clerk hurried on hat and coat and rushed from the store.

He knew where the Lewis home was located. His heart beat like a